

University Avenue Central Corridor Task Force Meeting
March 29, 2007
Central Corridor Resource Center
Meeting Summary

University Task Force members present: Reggie Aligada (co-chair), Julie Causey (co-chair), Marilyn Porter (co-chair), Veronica Burt, James Erkel, Courtney Henry, Richard Kleinbaum, Nieeta Presley, Jonathan Sage-Martinson, Robert Straughn, Bao Vang, Anne White

University Task Force members absent: Betty Charles, Joan Grzywinski, Seitu Jones, Vatou Her, Juan Linares, Byron Moore, Mai Thor, Brian Winkelaar

Staff present: Donna Drummond, Shawntera Hardy, Va-Megn Thoj

Others present: Karen Lyons, Joe Samuel, Mark Voerding

The meeting was called to order by co-chair Reggie Aligada. He welcomed everyone and introductions of the task force members, City staff and audience members were made.

There was discussion about the importance of the executive summary. This will be the document that most people will refer to day-to-day, rather than the full document. The task force decided it would like to review a draft of the executive summary before the Development Strategy is sent to the Planning Commission.

The task force spent the balance of the meeting discussing its comments and recommended changes to the Development Strategy. The following topics were discussed, the results of which are reflected in the attached document of task force comments from both the Mar. 13 and Mar. 29 meetings.

Topics discussed:

- Market language regarding impact of LRT.
- Potential additional stations.
- Label changes for maps on pp. 2, 17-18.
- Parking management language on pp. 14-16.
- Park and rides.
- World Cultural Heritage District.

At the end of the meeting, the task force decided that the April 12th meeting should focus primarily on discussing task force priorities and beginning review of a proposed interim zoning ordinance. Any additional minor wording changes that individual task force members wanted to suggest were to be sent out by e-mail to all, with any comments or discussion handled primarily via e-mail. The task force will spend a few minutes at the beginning of the Apr. 12 meeting briefly reviewing any such changes.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:10 p.m.

Meeting summary prepared by Donna Drummond, PED planning staff.

University Ave. Central Corridor Task Force
Comments on draft *Central Corridor Development Strategy*
Based on Mar. 13 and Mar. 29 task force discussion..

Where changes to the existing text in the document are suggested, new language is underlined and deleted language is crossed out.

Big Changes (listed in the order they were discussed)

1. Need for a good executive summary that is easy for people to read/understand. Task force input on the exec. summary is important. This will be the document people refer to more often than the full document. The exec. summary should be submitted to the Planning Commission along with the full document. A draft of the exec. summary, when prepared, will be distributed by e-mail to the task force for comments via e-mail discussion.
2. p. 7 – Market Conditions. The market is not necessarily set by supply and demand, but is influenced by regulations as well; suggest toning down the free market language. Regulation, supply and demand are all factors that influence the market, the language should not suggest that any one factor is more powerful than another.

Suggested language: “Light rail transit has the potential to create opportunities in ~~complements~~ real estate markets. ~~but typically does not establish or create a market opportunity on its own.~~ There are a number of factors which ~~support or deny~~ shape market opportunity. These include ~~primarily~~ supply/demand market dynamics and , demographic trends, regulation of development through zoning ordinances, and the responsiveness of government to encourage and facilitate private development.

3. p. 3 – What is the Central Corridor? There is only one map in the document that shows the entire corridor (page 3). It is important to show the line in context and emphasize that the Saint Paul section is part of a larger line that connects the two cities and is part of a larger regional transportation system. Consider either making the map showing the whole alignment more prominent, or consider inserting the map from p. 8 of the Directions Report showing the big picture of the regional transit system.
4. p. 11 – Vision statement. It’s seems very residential in tone and doesn’t emphasize commercial uses enough; “The corridor as many meeting places” as a title may not be necessary because the vision is more complicated than that; add commercial aspect, building or leveraging businesses; add ideas of wealth building and gateways; incorporate the historic aspect, the Avenue has always been an established area with housing and commercial.

Suggested language: (remove title The Corridor as Many Meeting Places) –
The Importance of Central Corridor

“The Central Corridor ~~will host many great, vibrant meeting places—places that draw people to experience the many neighborhoods, cultures, institutions and attractions of Saint Paul. The corridor will be a place that~~ has historically been the City’s most important commercial corridor, beginning in the downtown and serving as a gateway into Saint Paul from the west. It includes both large and small businesses that provide goods, services, and employment to the larger community. It is bordered by distinct residential neighborhoods that include many cultures, schools, places of worship, and other community institutions.

Our Vision for the Future

The Central Corridor will build on its assets to become a place that has stronger businesses, more vibrant neighborhoods, and more beautiful urban places. Along University Avenue and in the downtown, it will invite residents, shoppers, employees, and visitors to linger on safe, pedestrian-friendly, attractive, tree-lined boulevards; to establish homes and a sense of community in stable and diverse neighborhoods; and to work and invest in an area ~~with~~ that provides a range of employment and economic opportunities.”

5. The concept of affordable housing or mixed income housing isn’t emphasized enough in the document.

Suggested language: Add new objectives and strategies under Principle 2 – Benefit and Strengthen the Diverse Communities along the Corridor.

New 2.1 (renumber those that follow) – Facilitate the development of new mixed-income housing units along all segments of the corridor. Units should respond to the diversity of housing needs in terms of income and type of housing, and provide life-cycle housing choices that enable residents to remain in their neighborhoods as their housing needs change over time.

New 2.2 – Encourage continual reinvestment in the existing housing stock by both ownership and rental property owners in all neighborhoods along the corridor.

New strategies to facilitate 2.1 and 2.2:

- Coordinate with the Housing Plan Task Force to ensure that citywide housing policies address the goal of providing mixed-income housing along transit corridors, where rising property values may create barriers to developing affordable housing.
- Form a creative housing finance work group to develop specific recommendations on appropriate housing models, financial tools, policy recommendations, and potential sites for inclusive housing development along the Central Corridor.
- Work with the City’s housing partners, such as the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency, LISC, Habitat for Humanity, local banks, community development corporations, area foundations, and others to ensure a coordinated and effective approach to meeting housing needs along the Central Corridor.

6. p. 21 – Initiative #31 regarding the Midway Retail District. Strike the words “single purpose” and use “evolve” instead of “expand” in the first sentence. This makes it clearer that the shopping area will continue to move away from its current single-purpose function.
7. p. 45 & 46 – The 3D rendering of the intensified Midway shopping area on p. 46 doesn’t convey the vibrancy of the real-life examples on p. 45. Can it be reworked to make it look more interesting/compelling? Consider adding more differing building heights/shapes, and focal points such as fountains or circles, particularly on the blocks closest to Snelling. Also add language under point 5 of Demonstrated Design Directions on p. 46 that encourages more of a balance between the current chain retail stores (which dominate now) and specialty or “mom and pop” stores. Finally, add language (new number 6 under Design Directions) about the need to carefully analyze both proposed new development and transportation improvements (for LRT, bus, pedestrian, bicycle, car/truck) to ensure development of a balanced and coordinated network of movement throughout the Midway area.

8. p. 1 – City-building language in the second to the last paragraph should be more prominent. Consider adding a new sentence in the first paragraph on p. 1 – “A \$1 billion investment in public transit is a once-in-a century opportunity for any city. In addition to the resulting transportation improvement, it is a tremendous opportunity for city-building and place-making. (This language should be what’s highlighted in the blue/large font. The balance of the language in this first paragraph should be added to the paragraph below in regular font.)
9. p. 6 – Preserving Opportunities for Future Stations. Add stronger language to support adding additional stations now. Consider adding the following sentence to the end of the first paragraph – ~~“As development and population densities increase along the proposed LRT route, and as existing cultural and commercial destinations strengthen and new ones emerge, opportunities may arise for additional transit stations.~~ Residents have expressed strong interest in new stations on University at Western Avenue, Victoria Street, Hamline and/or Cleveland Avenue/Transfer Road as well as future extensions that ‘loop’ Wacouta Commons and the Northeast Quadrant, connect to the Entertainment District, or continue eastbound past Lowertown. Strongly encourage the Metropolitan Council to consider adding stations at Western, Victoria, Hamline and Cleveland/Transfer Road during the Preliminary Engineering process. If stations cannot be added initially, ensure that the base infrastructure is put in place to minimize the cost of adding stations in the future as demand and available funding allow.

p. 15 – Under Objective 4 regarding improving mobility, revise the 4th strategy as follows: “Support adding stations at Western, Victoria, Hamline and/or Cleveland/Transfer Road during the Preliminary Engineering process for the LRT line or at a minimum, preserve future opportunities to build LRT stations at Western, Victoria, Hamline and Cleveland/Transfer Road.”

10. p. 89 – 19 Community-Building Strategies. Add another strategy focused on finding new resources for implementation. Suggested additional strategy:

20) Resources for Implementation Strategy

- a. Consider using existing City programs and resources in new and innovative ways to finance implementation, including focusing existing programs in the “Transit Opportunity Zone” and adjacent residential neighborhoods.
- b. Request additional state and federal funding to assist with public infrastructure, housing, and business improvement programs within the corridor.
- c. Consider using innovative programs such as tax-increment financing or business and parking improvement districts to implement area-wide improvements. Propose changes to state law if needed.

11. Add the expectation that developers initiate discussions with the community about proposed development in advance of applying for development approvals from the City. Consider adding an additional objective under Principle 6 – Involve collaboration from design to completion.

New objective 6.4 – Communicate the expectation to developers that the City expects them to engage in early and meaningful dialogue about proposed development with affected district councils and other appropriate community groups prior to applying for development approvals from the City.

New strategy for 6.4 – In preliminary discussions with developers about potential projects, City staff and officials will encourage early communication and dialogue with affected district councils and other appropriate community groups, prior to any official

application to the City for development approvals. Require this early and on-going dialogue for any projects seeking City financing assistance.

12. p. 15 – Strategies under Principle 4. Delete “Explore long-term potential and demand for a Park N’ Ride structure in the Westgate Industrial area.”
13. pp. 14-16 – Principles, Objectives, and Strategies. A parking management strategy is mentioned as a strategy under Principles 2, 3 and 5, and talked about in slightly different ways. Can these be tied together better somehow, instead of being scattered in several places as they are now?

Little Changes (listed in the order they were discussed):

1. p. 8 – Market areas map. Add major north-south cross streets for geographic reference points.
2. p. 8 – Development potential by station area. This chart needs to be reformatted so it’s easier to read. Put title at top within the chart. Add “units”, “sq. ft.”, or “rooms” to the column headings.
3. p. 1 – The Opportunity. Expand on/clarify the Denver T-REX example cited. The 19 mile line that was added cost \$879 million and by the time it opened approximately \$4.25 billion in private development had been built, was under construction, or permitted.
4. p. 66 – Graphic of a street-level view downtown at 6th Street. Consider removing the TCF logo and making it a more generic sign.
5. p. 23 – Initiative #51 “Cultural Heritage District.” Add “World” as in “World Cultural Heritage District. Delete geographic definition from Rice to Dale and just reference east end of the corridor as this concept is still evolving and specific geographic boundaries have not been determined.
6. p. 2 – Map of corridor assets. Highlight the neighborhood names in a fuzzy-bordered color (sort of glowing) so they stand out more as attractions/assets in their own right. For the Prospect Park label on the far left of the map, place an arrow pointing to the west, as Prospect Park is actually in Minneapolis, not St. Paul.
7. p. 7 – Market Conditions, East Market Area – instead of Thomas-Dale and Frogtown in the second sentence it should say Thomas-Dale, Summit-University, and Lexington-Hamline.
8. p. 17-18 – Map of corridor with 90 initiatives. Please add a key that shows what the different land use colors mean.
9. p. 17 map, p. 19 map – The station in St. Anthony Park near Raymond is labeled Carleton Station on these maps. Change the label to “St. Anthony Park” consistent with Initiative #9.